

MYRON C. TAYLOR:

Cornell Benefactor, Industrial Czar, and FDR's "Ambassador Extraordinary"

RIGHT:

Myron C. Taylor's portrait, painted by Frank O. Salisbury, hangs in the foyer of Myron Taylor Hall alongside a portrait of his wife, Anabel Taylor.

W. DAVID CURTISS '40 AND C. EVAN STEWART '77

Editor's note: This is the first part of a two-part series on the life of Myron C. Taylor, Cornell Law School class of 1894. This first installment will cover his life up to and through his phenomenal business career. The second installment (to be published in the fall/winter 2006 issue of the Cornell Law Forum) will focus on his diplomatic career as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Ambassador Extraordinary."



Myron Charles Taylor had an amazing career. And yet when he died in 1959, *The New York Times's* lengthy obituary ended with the reserved observation that "[h]is was, indeed, a useful life." In large part this understated compliment was due to Mr. Taylor's intense personal distaste for publicity; when he gave Cornell University \$1.5 million in 1928 for the construction of a new law school complex, for example, the national media called him "the man nobody knows."

Notwithstanding that label, Mr. Taylor was in fact one of the major figures in American life during the first half of the twentieth century. Besides his contribution (monetary and otherwise) to Cornell—in addition to the main Law School building, he gave two other buildings to Cornell, one of which is named after his wife, Anabel Taylor—he played leading roles in two distinct spheres: he was probably America's leading industrialist, and he later was a key diplomatic figure at the hub of many of the most important geopolitical events before, during, and after World War II.



LEFT to RIGHT:

Mr. Taylor with his wife, Anabel

Mr. Taylor appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1929.

Mr. Taylor was proclaimed “The Man of the Week in Finance” in 1932.



The Boy from Lyons, New York

Although Myron Taylor would later own a seventy-room mansion in New York City, a fabled villa in Tuscany, and a baronial country estate on Long Island, he was born (in 1874) and grew up in the small upstate town of Lyons, New York, just south of Lake Ontario. There, his father owned and operated a tannery business.

Myron Taylor dreamed of becoming a lawyer, and that dream brought him to Cornell Law School, where he studied as an undergraduate and ultimately earned a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1894. Instead of heading to Wall Street (as his first biographers have suggested), Mr. Taylor returned to Lyons, where for five years he struggled to establish a small-town law practice. Also never mentioned in those biographies was his early ambition for elective office. Shortly after graduating from the Law School, he twice ran for the New York State Assembly—as a Democrat; both times he was defeated.

By 1900, Mr. Taylor decided he wanted a bigger canvas on which to paint, and he left Lyons to join his brother William Taylor (Cornell A.B., class of 1891) on Wall Street. In that venue his focus turned to corporate law. But even as his legal career finally began to flourish, his focus changed again.

Textile Czar

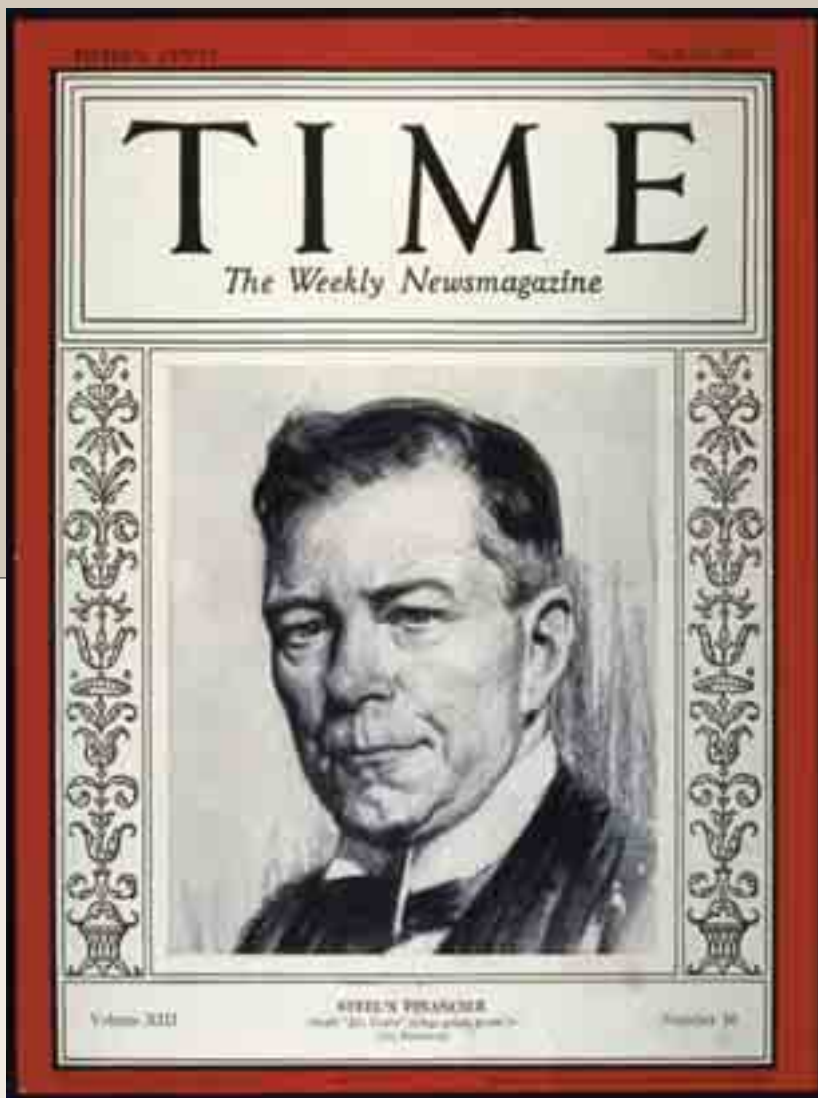
Arising out of litigation he had handled for his father’s tannery, Myron Taylor bid for and won

a U.S.-government contract for mail pouches and related products. Mr. Taylor quickly exploited this lucrative business and began not only to introduce numerous innovations (for example, the transparent “window” in envelopes through which a return address is displayed), but to buy up competitors.

He expanded beyond tannery products to cotton. After studying the cotton markets and identifying where the best opportunities were, Mr. Taylor began to acquire struggling mills, transforming their labor practices and modernizing their technology. This modus operandi later became known as the “Taylor Formula.” Applying the formula with great discipline, and demonstrating remarkable skills in what today would be called corporate finance, Mr. Taylor soon consolidated and eventually dominated the textile industry.

Not content with these successes, Mr. Taylor branched out. With remarkable foresight as to the future potential of the automobile industry, which was then in its infancy, he established a separate textile firm that became the leading supplier of combined tire fabric. During World War I, his plants became the major suppliers to the American military effort.

Throughout his business career, Mr. Taylor not only had keen insights into product and technological innovation, corporate finance, modern labor relations, and the workings of government, he also had an uncanny sense of timing—a sense of just when to take on a project and when to get out. At the peak of the textile markets industry after the Great War, Mr. Taylor foresaw a boom–bust cycle coming in the commodities markets. Thus, by 1923 he had disposed of all of his holdings in the mills.



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An Early Retirement or a Second Business Career?

Mr. Taylor had built up a sizable fortune, and he contemplated a blissful retirement with Anabel, to whom he had been married for three decades. He was soon diverted, however, by other commercial opportunities, requests from virtually every major public company to serve as a director, and (most importantly) the urgings of the two leading Wall Street bankers of the day—J. P. Morgan and George F. Baker—to help turn around the finances of U.S. Steel.

Mr. Taylor was reluctant to get involved, but he was told by Mr. Morgan that he would break his own long-standing rule of not holding an office in an outside company on the condition that Mr. Taylor sign on as well. With that, Mr. Taylor's answer was a simple one: "I'll do it."

Thus began Mr. Taylor's career at U.S. Steel. On September 15, 1925, he was elected a director and a member of the all-powerful finance committee. He became chairman of the finance committee in 1929. From March 29, 1932, until April 5, 1938, he was the chairman and chief executive officer. Not until January 12, 1956, did Mr. Taylor officially retire from the board.

From 1927 to 1938, Mr. Taylor dominated the affairs of U.S. Steel (often called simply "the Corporation"), leaving an indelible mark on its history. By then, no longer "the man nobody knows," he soon was featured on the covers of or in articles in *Time*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, *The New Yorker*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Mr. Taylor's initial focus at U.S. Steel, however,

LEFT to RIGHT:

Myron C. Taylor meeting with John L. Lewis, the head of the Committee for Industrial Organization, regarding organizing the U.S. Steel workers

The *Myron C. Taylor* was launched in 1929 for the Pittsburgh Steamship Company (the private fleet of the U.S. Steel Corporation). Now a veteran of the Great Lakes, the *Taylor* remains an active, versatile member of the USS Great Lakes Fleet in the limestone, coal, and aggregates trades.



was on acquiring a first-hand understanding of the Corporation's wide-flung operations, as well as why it had "experienced 'a slide from leadership.'"

After almost two years of study, he turned to the Corporation's existing indebtedness, which totaled a staggering \$400 million. In short order (and just before the stock market's collapse in October 1929), he retired \$340 million in debt, saving U.S. Steel approximately \$31 million in annual debt-servicing costs. J. P. Morgan would later say that this action "was really entirely due to [Myron]. This was the most important thing that ever happened ... [W]e should now be 'busted' permanently if it hadn't been for that."

Mr. Taylor next turned to applying the Taylor Formula to U.S. Steel, closing or selling scores of plants, reorganizing the complex and often contradictory corporate structure of the world's largest industrial company, and upgrading and modernizing the Corporation's operations and technology. It would have been hard enough to do all that in the best of times, but Mr. Taylor managed to do it during the worst years of the Depression.

An Innovative Approach to Labor: "All America Gasped"

At a time when businesses were folding and unemployment lines were long (throughout America and the world), U.S. Steel was faced with falling demand and the need to cut production costs. Rather than affect a wholesale

Mr. Taylor's share-the-work program provided jobs and incomes to at least 75,000 U.S. Steel employees who otherwise would have had neither.

cut in the 200,000 plus workforce, however, Mr. Taylor came up with an innovative alternative. He inaugurated a share-the-work program.

Under this plan, work was divided among current employees—no one lost a job—rather, everyone continued at his or her regular rate of pay but for a shorter working day with correspondingly less total compensation. In 1932, when U.S. Steel was operating at approximately 17 percent capacity, Mr. Taylor's share-the-work program provided jobs and incomes to at least 75,000 U.S. Steel employees who otherwise would have had neither. Mr. Taylor initiated a number of other key relief programs for U.S. Steel employees during these bleak years (for example, \$16 million in direct relief in one year), but he always considered his

share-the-work program to be "the most important single contribution to the human side of the [D]epression."

Despite his private and innovative initiatives vis-à-vis his labor force, Mr. Taylor did not start out as a New Dealer or as a supporter of unions. And when the Wagner Act, which supported collective bargaining, was passed in 1935, Mr. Taylor was not (to say the least) an enthusiastic supporter.

And yet in early 1937, as "all America gasped," Mr. Taylor struck a deal with John L. Lewis, who was then head of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO). Through that deal, U.S. Steel agreed to recognize a CIO subsidiary for purposes of representing and



organizing U.S. Steel workers. The Corporation thus became the first major industrial company in America to take this historic step.

A lot has been written—much of it apocryphal, including a story giving significant credit to Anabel Taylor—about how this landmark development in labor relations came to be. The basis for the deal actually derived from what later became known as the “Myron Taylor Labor Formula,” a 100-word document Mr. Taylor drafted at his Italian villa in 1936 while reflecting on how to bring about labor stability and long-term prosperity for the Corporation. The document reads:

“The Company recognizes the right of its employees to bargain collectively through representatives freely chosen by them without dictation, coercion or intimidation in any form or from any source. It will negotiate and contract with the representatives of any group of its employees so chosen and with any organization as the representative of its members, subject to the recognition of the principle that the right to work is not dependent on membership or non-membership in any organization and subject to the right of every employee freely to bargain in such manner and through such representatives, if any, as he chooses.”

Mr. Taylor’s deal with Lewis was blasted by many other captains of industry. The chief executive officer of Republic Steel, for example, publicly rebuked Mr. Taylor and led his company in the opposite direction—a path that resulted in massive and bloody labor riots. Mr. Lewis, on the other hand and perhaps not surprisingly, praised Mr. Taylor for “one of the outstanding landmarks in the industrial history of our country.” Mr. Lewis predicted that Mr. Taylor’s “name will be remembered and revered by labor for generations.” Many other industrial and political leaders weighed in with praise or scorn, but we will give the last word to J.P. Morgan—hardly a lover of organized labor: “[Myron’s] was the finest performance I have ever known.”

Having eased the minds of workers and turned the world’s largest industrial corporation back into a thriving, highly profitable enterprise, Mr. Taylor told the Corporation that he was ready to turn the reins over to younger men. On April 5, 1938, he resigned as chairman and chief executive officer and prepared to enter a “sabbatical period of life.” His plan was that he and Anabel would spend part of the year in Tuscany and the remainder traveling around the world.

In the second installment of the series on Myron Taylor, we will see how, within weeks of his “retirement,” Mr. Taylor was called upon by the president of the United States to undertake critical diplomatic duties that would ultimately span the World War II years and involve some of the most important geopolitical issues of that era. ■

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MYRON C. TAYLOR, PART TWO:

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Ambassador Extraordinary"

LEFT TO RIGHT:

Myron C. Taylor's portrait, painted by Frank O. Salisbury

President Roosevelt's letter to Mr. Taylor appointing him as FDR's personal representative to Pope Pius XII

W. DAVID CURTISS '40 AND C. EVAN STEWART '77

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Just weeks after stepping down as chief executive officer of U.S. Steel in April 1938, Myron Taylor received a telephone call from his friend, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR). President Roosevelt asked Mr. Taylor to help solve the deepening crisis of Jewish refugees attempting to flee persecution in Hitler's Germany. Mr. Taylor promptly foreswore his personal plans and accepted the challenge. To carry out this role, FDR appointed Mr. Taylor "Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary."

The Evian Conference

Although Hitler would later seek to exterminate Jews throughout Europe, his initial goal was to force all Jews to leave Germany. In the aftermath of the Austrian annexation and worsening conditions for the Jews, FDR told his cabinet that "something has to be done [on the refugee issue]." In response, Sumner Welles (the under secretary of state) proposed (and FDR agreed to) an international conference—the Evian Conference—to address the issue. Mr. Taylor's first task was to represent the United States.

FDR's charge to Mr. Taylor was somewhat glib and simplistic: "All you need to do is get these people together." But Mr. Taylor knew that it was going to be a lot more difficult than that. Why? Because most of the world had a strong anti-Semitic bias that manifested itself directly in immigration bans (or, at best, very strict limitations).

The first order of business in Evian was the election of a chairman—Mr. Taylor was quickly designated; he was a popular figure with the delegates, who were impressed with his "sincerity and ... kindness." Because the



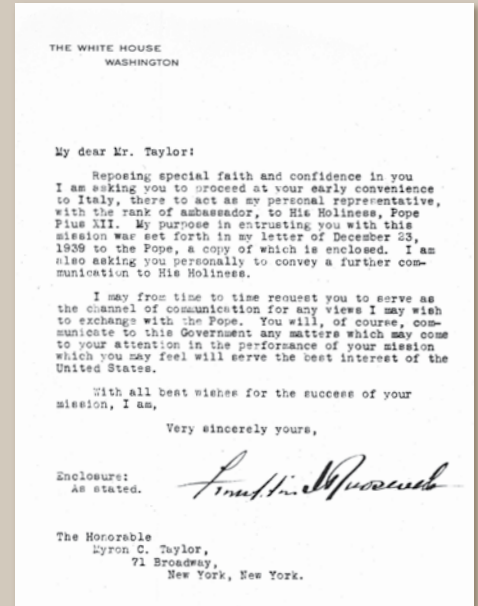
countries assembled would not change their immigration policies, however, no constructive proposals emerged from the conference to help the refugees. Notwithstanding the failure to advance a significant proposal, Mr. Taylor was able to cajole one concrete achievement out of the reluctant delegates—the creation of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (ICR), an organization to be based in London whose first tasks would be to negotiate with Hitler's government to allow emigration and then to resettle the refugees.

The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees

Mr. Taylor represented the United States on the ICR, and the person chosen to work under him as day-to-day director was a prominent lawyer, George Rublee. The complexity of the

task was daunting and led to many dead ends. A breakthrough occurred when Mr. Taylor traveled to Rome in early 1939 to meet with church officials and members of the Italian government in response to Mussolini's decree to expel all Jews from Italy; Mr. Taylor was able to help Mussolini save face and the 90,000 Italian Jews "were never expelled from Italy ... [and] the decree ... [was] never enforced at all."

On the same trip, Mr. Taylor was introduced to Hitler's doctor and Herman Goering (who were vacationing on the Riviera). Mr. Taylor explained the ICR's plan for an orderly emigration of German Jews. The doctor and Mr. Goering were favorably impressed by the plan and, after checking with Hitler, invited Mr. Rublee to Berlin. There, the Nazis agreed to permit 150,000 "able-bodied" Jews to emigrate, with dependents allowed to follow later.



U.S. policy makers rejoiced (Sumner Welles told FDR that it was "better than we hoped for"), but this celebration turned out to be tragically premature for several reasons. The first was the onrush of World War II in Europe—that is, the Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia and Poland (in Mr. Taylor's words: "We failed because of the war coming on just at the moment of success"). Another reason was the failure to underwrite the cost of the emigration (FDR had been offhandedly confident that "the thousand richest Jews in the United States" would pay for the entire process). Finally, a home for the refugees had never been found.¹ As Mr. Welles later wrote, "notwithstanding the tireless work of ... Myron Taylor, the final results amounted to little more than zero."

Ambassador to the Vatican

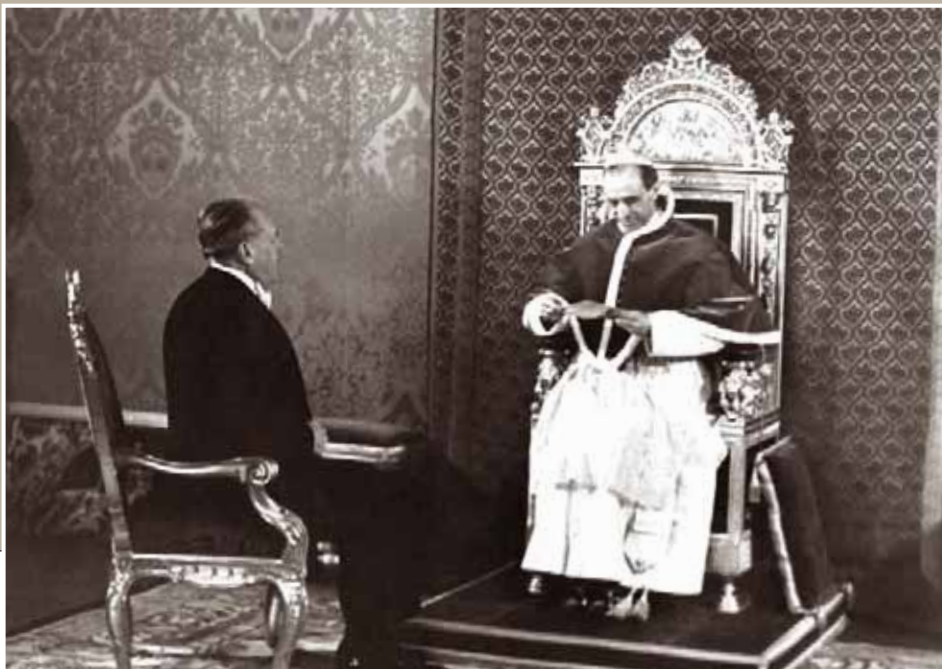
On December 22, 1939, as Mr. Taylor was recuperating at his home in New York (having had two operations and been in the hospital for four weeks), President Roosevelt called to ask Mr. Taylor "to take on a special mission for me." Because America would soon have "no diplomatic representation in Europe, except probably France, [t]here must be someone who can keep in touch with European events," said the president. Mr. Taylor was told by FDR that he wanted Mr. Taylor to play the critical role as the president's personal representative to Pope Pius XII.

CLOCKWISE from NEAR RIGHT:

Myron C. Taylor waits while Pope Pius XII reads FDR's letter.

President Roosevelt's letter to the pope, acknowledging the pope's acceptance of Myron C. Taylor as the president's representative

With the background of a blazing building, this German Panzer wagon and an antitank gun are hauled to a more advantageous position as the German armed forces roll closer to Moscow.



Mr. Taylor initially demurred because of his health but told the president he would “go if you want me to do so.” FDR said Mr. Taylor could wait until he had recovered sufficiently to travel to Rome but that he (FDR) wanted “to make the announcement at Christmas time.” And so FDR made the timely announcement, but not before making a second call to Mr. Taylor’s closest advisor—Anabel—“to make sure there would be no backsliding on Myron’s part.”

Mr. Taylor’s appointment was later described by Eleanor Roosevelt as one of the “wise preliminary steps in our preparation for war.” Mr. Taylor was an inspired choice, not only because of his eminent qualifications, but also because he already knew the pope (and Mussolini). Moreover, Mr Taylor was a prominent Episcopalian (which would help blunt any expected religious outcry against the appointment from Protestants), and he would not need Senate approval or direct government funding (FDR did not dare seek the Senate’s advice and consent for such a controversial appointment).

On the international front, the Vatican was likely to be the critical source for geopolitical information, since it was the only place where every nation had (or would soon have) a representative. Moreover, with the world teetering on the brink of all-out war, the American government viewed the Vatican as the most likely diplomatic venue for achieving a peaceful *détente* in Europe. FDR also took into account the pope’s enormous influence

Mr. Taylor found the pope shrewd and diplomatically subtle, while the pope reported that he had only the “highest esteem and appreciation” for the president’s representative.

and prestige, not only among Catholics, but also with millions of non-Catholics. The president also took into account the obvious benefits of having his representative establish a strong personal bond with the pope.²

Mr. Taylor’s First Assignment

On February 16, 1940, Mr. Taylor departed for Rome with a personal, handwritten letter that the president had asked Mr. Taylor to personally deliver to the pope. The president’s principal task for Mr. Taylor was to keep Italy from joining the war on Germany’s side. Even without the benefit of hindsight, this was an impossible task—Mussolini, whom Mr. Taylor thought “had done great things for Italy in the earlier days,” was “too far committed to Hitler.” But try he did. Mr. Taylor had an unprecedented number of meetings with the pope (who was visibly moved by the president’s handwritten note), and it was agreed that FDR and the pope independently (and repeatedly) would implore Il Duce not to

become belligerent. This strategy failed. As FDR later told James Farley (a key aide): “We bullied Mussolini in every way possible and tried to get the influence of the pope to keep Italy from getting into war, but Italy went in.”

Mr. Taylor’s meetings with the pope did have one immediate, positive outcome—a close working relationship quickly developed between them. Mr. Taylor reported back to FDR that the pope had offered “very close collaboration with the president, through me, and daily access to the pope day or night whenever desired.” Mr. Taylor found the pope shrewd and diplomatically subtle, while the pope reported that he had only the “highest esteem and appreciation” for the president’s representative.

Unfortunately, just weeks after Mussolini’s decision to enter the war on June 10, 1940, Mr. Taylor ate a bad lobster at a Rome dinner party, became quite ill, and required another operation. Even as he lay in his bed recuperating, Mr. Taylor lost none of his sense of

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Feb. 14 -
1940 -

Your Holiness

In my letter of December 23, 1939 I had the honor to suggest that it would give me great satisfaction to send to you my own representation in order that our parallel endeavors for peace and the alleviation of suffering might be assisted. Your Holiness was good enough to reply, that the choice of Mr. Myron C. Taylor as my representative was acceptable and that you would receive him. I am entrusting this

special mission to Mr. Taylor who is a very old friend of mine, and in whom I repose the utmost confidence. His humanitarian efforts in behalf of those whom political disruption has rendered homeless are well known to Your Holiness. I shall be happy to feel that he may be the channel of communication for my views upon and I may wish to exchange in the interest of concord among the peoples of the world.

I am asking Mr. Taylor

to convey my cordial greetings to you, my old and good friend, and my sincere hope that the common ideals of religion and of humanity itself can have united opposition for the reestablishment of a more permanent peace in the foundations of freedom and an assurance of life and integrity of all nations under God.

Cordially your friend
Franklin D. Roosevelt

command; an Italian official visiting Mr. Taylor described him as a man "... still sitting on a throne; and yet that beneath the august presence was a kindly person who was perfectly willing to listen."³ After his doctors gave their approval, Mr. Taylor returned to the United States with the future of his Vatican mission unknown.

Lend Lease to the Soviet Union

Congress had passed the Lend-Lease Act in March of 1941, which gave FDR the ability to provide defense materials to countries, principally in Great Britain, deemed to be of vital importance. The Lend-Lease law was not intended to, and did not, cover the Soviet Union. But with all of continental Europe having been overrun, England hanging on by a thread, and the Nazis conquering wide swatches of land in Russia daily, FDR knew (1) that it was critical to keep Russia in the war and (2) that without huge influxes of military and other aid to the Soviet Union, America might soon be the only nonfascist nation left standing. FDR also knew the only major obstacle to America's getting aid to Russia would be the Roman Catholic Church, partly because of the strong isolationistic bent of some U.S. bishops (primarily with Irish and German immigrant constituencies), but more because of the church's dogmatic opposition to atheistic communism. Specifically, the pope's 1937 encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* expressly forbade Catholics from collaboration of any kind with communism.⁴ FDR believed that opposition to aid by the



church would inevitably lead to a Congressional roadblock. And so Mr. Taylor was dispatched to Rome to ensure there would be no such opposition.

With the Nazis besieging Moscow, Mr. Taylor left for Rome on September 4, 1941. FDR almost caused this "delicate mission" to fail because of another of the president's personal letters to the pope. A great deal of FDR's letter went to some length vouching for the facts that "churches in Russia are open" and that there was "a real possibility that Russia may, as a result of the present conflict, recognize freedom of religion." The pope and

his aides knew that exactly the contrary was true and wrote numerous memorandums questioning (among other things) FDR's grasp of world events (for example, according to the pope, FDR did not understand Stalin and wanted to know if FDR was "apologizing for Communism").

Notwithstanding FDR's blunder, Mr. Taylor was able to convince the pope to have the church take the position that the encyclical was directed only against the Soviet government and was not meant to hurt the Russian people.⁵ This policy shift was ultimately communicated in a back-channel way, so as

LEFT to RIGHT:

Mrs. and Mr. Taylor with Swiss Guards in the corridor of the Apostolic Palace after a papal audience in 1940.

Mr. Taylor in an informal discussion with the pope

LOWER RIGHT:

Mr. Taylor chatting with various Allied officials during a Vatican reception



not to call into question the pope's official neutrality. By the end of October 1941, various U.S. church officials were offering official expressions of affection for the Russian people and declaring that any American aid to them would be a welcome thing. With organized resistance thus averted, FDR cabled Stalin that aid was coming soon, and the military equipment and resources that allowed the USSR to turn the tide on the eastern front followed thereafter.

While Mr. Taylor lobbied the Roman Catholic Church not to oppose aid to the USSR, the pope and his aides lobbied for something else—preventing the bombing of Rome (and the Vatican) by the Allied forces. The British, having suffered egregious damage from bombing by the Axis powers (including a handful of Italian planes), were outspoken about the importance of striking back at all major Axis cities, including Rome. The Vatican, in turn, warned Mr. Taylor that the church would meet any Allied bombing with a public rebuke.

While remarking that the church had been silent during the London bombings, Mr. Taylor pledged to work to limit bombing to only specific military targets. He waged a persistent campaign over the next several years to convince Winston Churchill and FDR to refrain from bombing Rome. Churchill, influenced by England's domestic politics, would not agree with Mr. Taylor's importunings. FDR told Mr. Taylor he felt obliged to defer to the English prime minister on this matter. Yet, Mr. Taylor's repeated efforts (and constant pressure from

We now know what took place during Mr. Taylor's unprecedented trip to the Vatican in 1942. But at the time the world did not, and speculation was rampant. Mussolini's take was somewhat more colorful: "If Myron Taylor tries to return to Italy he will be put in handcuffs."

the church) did have the ultimate effect of sparing the Vatican from any significant harm.

A Historic Mission

By the summer of 1942, FDR and the U.S. State Department were concerned that the Vatican might promote a compromise peace and FDR decided to send Mr. Taylor back to the Vatican. But how could such a trip be arranged while Italy was at war with the United States? Ultimately, Mussolini's son-in-law, foreign minister Ciano, approved Mr. Taylor's visit under the terms of the Lateran Treaty of 1929, in which the Italian government recognized the Vatican as an independent state.⁶

The main purpose of Mr. Taylor's trip to the Vatican was to convey to the pope and his

advisors that British and American goals, expressed in the Atlantic Charter, were based essentially on the same Christian principles as those detailed by the pope. Mr. Taylor also wanted to impress upon the Vatican the vast might of America's military-industrial complex and to make clear that the United States would "support the [church] in resisting any Axis proposals of peace without victory" and would "prosecute this war until the Axis collapses." After flying into the Rome airport (which was filled with goose-stepping German soldiers) on September 17, 1942, Mr. Taylor was met by church officials who whisked him, with police escort, into the Vatican.

Mr. Taylor later reported back to Washington that he had convinced the Vatican that the United States would win the war.⁷ As to there



As to there being “no peace without victory,” the pope’s formal response was straightforward: he had “never thought in terms of peace by compromise at any cost. On certain principles of right and justice there can be no compromise.”



atrocities. Mr. Taylor was assured that the church had been “working incessantly for the relief ... very particularly for the

refugees and for the Jews.” At the same time, the Vatican’s reaction to speaking out publicly, based upon Mr. Taylor’s evidence was one of caution, fueled by the false rumors of German atrocities committed during World War I (and vehement German criticisms thereafter of the church’s comments during that war), as well as by the church’s concern about publicly taking one side of the war effort, fear of the then omni-potent German war machine reeking even greater havoc on Jews and on the Church itself (inside Germany and elsewhere), and the belief that if the Church specifically criticized Nazi war atrocities it would also be compelled to criticize those committed by the Soviet Union (something the United States did not want). For his part, Mr. Taylor assisted U.S. bishops in drafting their November 14 pastoral, in which they stated their “deep sense of revulsion against the cruel indignities heaped upon the Jews,” and protested “against despotic tyrants who have lost all sense of humanity by condemning thousands of innocent persons to death ... , by placing other thousands of innocent victims in concentration camps, and by permitting unnumbered persons to die of starvation.” In his 1942 Christmas message the pope spoke out for “the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race,

have been condemned to death or progressive wasting away.”⁸

On his return trip from Italy, Mr. Taylor had a series of meetings, first with Generalissimo Franco (Spain) and later with Prime Minister Salazar (Portugal).⁹ Mr. Taylor had never before met Franco, who had been flirting with joining the Axis powers—a possibility that would have had incredibly dire consequences for the impending landings by U.S. forces in North Africa, as well as for any future military campaigns in and around the Mediterranean. Mr. Taylor spent two hours with Franco detailing the military and industrial might that America would be bringing to bear on all that faced her in the war. As the U.S. Ambassador to Spain reported to the president (and later wrote in his memoirs), after those two hours with Mr. Taylor, Franco never again spoke of abandoning Spain’s stance of neutrality. Mr. Taylor thereafter met Salazar, a leader with whom he was on “friendly terms.” Mr. Taylor used this occasion to lobby for an Allied air base lease in neutral Portugal (the lease was ultimately granted).

We now know what took place during Mr. Taylor’s unprecedented trip to the Vatican in 1942. But at the time the world did not, and speculation was rampant. The published German reactions ran the gamut from “paradoxical and strange,” to “extraordinary and altogether contrary to accepted customs,” to “unimportant.” Mussolini’s take was somewhat more colorful: “If Myron Taylor tries to return to Italy he will be put in handcuffs.”

being “no peace without victory,” the pope’s formal response was straightforward: he had “never thought in terms of peace by compromise at any cost. On certain principles of right and justice there can be no compromise”; and the church would reject any proposal from any source that would give “free rein to those who would undermine ... the foundations of Christianity and persecute religion and the church.” This response (which, when Mr. Taylor showed it to Mr. Churchill in London, prompted the prime minister to proclaim it “a great historical document”) was interpreted as a shift by the pope away from neutrality, toward agreeing with the concept of unconditional surrender. The pope’s response thus clearly encouraged FDR to blurt out the same concept of unconditional surrender as the Allies’ ultimate war aim at the Casablanca conference in February 1943.

Mr. Taylor’s trip provided two other important historical events. On September 25, 1942, he asked the pope to “speak out against the inhuman treatment of refugees and hostages—especially the Jews.” The next day Mr. Taylor brought to the pope and his advisors the first direct evidence of the Nazi’s organized genocide against the Jews in Poland and asked that the pope speak out against these

Deposing Mussolini

Back in Washington, Mr. Taylor kept up with a diverse portfolio: postwar planning for the state department (which included work that ultimately resulted in the Bretton-Woods Agreement and the United Nations (UN) resettlement of European refugees for the ICR), and protecting the Vatican from aerial bombing. As Italian support for fascism was declining and the plans for the Allied invasion of Sicily were accelerating in early 1943, Mr. Taylor undertook yet another assignment—this time on his “own initiative.”

For some time Mr. Taylor had been trying to “sow the seeds of getting rid of Mussolini’s government.” With “discreet” inquiries of Vatican officials not seeming to make progress, on May 29, Mr. Taylor passed on to the apostolic delegate in Washington, D.C., a message, the substance of which was that Italy (1) was facing one of the “gravest hours” in its history, (2) would endure massive destruction unless it separated itself from Germany, and (3) could avoid such a result with a new government that would take the nation out of the war. Because Mr. Taylor’s warning had the tone of an ultimatum, and given the Vatican’s difficult relationship with Mussolini (and the church’s ongoing fear of what would happen to Rome), the pope reacted cautiously. On June 4, a response was delivered to Mr. Taylor, asking whether his message came with the consent of the president and adding the key language that “the new [Italian] government” would depend “upon the will of the Sovereign.”

When Mr. Taylor reported this exchange to the president, FDR replied: “Myron, this is the first break in the war. It is wonderful.” What both men understood by the Vatican’s response was that the church (if Mr. Taylor’s message represented official Washington policy) was prepared to contact King Emmanuel (the Italian Sovereign) to try to move Italy away from Mussolini and the Axis powers. On June 11, the day after Sicily was invaded, an emboldened FDR appealed directly to the Italian people to avoid destruction, rid themselves of fascism, leave the war, and join the ranks of free people.

The president’s public message (coming on the heels of the Mr. Taylor’s private message) was interpreted by the Vatican (correctly) to mean that something less than unconditional surrender was necessary to take Italy out of

the war (that is, that if a new government was formed, the Allies would negotiate with it). With the destructive war growing closer and closer, the pope met with King Emmanuel to discuss FDR’s message, and the King ultimately felt compelled to “ask” for Mussolini’s resignation on July 24 (he was subsequently imprisoned). After extended negotiations between General Dwight D. Eisenhower and the new Italian government, Italy officially surrendered on September 8.

Unfortunately, this good news was accompanied by the corresponding bad news of German troops entering Rome. During the ensuing bleak period (it would be ten months until the liberation of Rome), Mr. Taylor’s main focus regarding the Italian front was to be an ever-vigilant irritant to ensure against the Vatican being destroyed as the Allies forced the Germans from Italian soil.

Paving the Way for the UN

Just at the time Allied troops were preparing to enter Rome in June of 1944, Myron Taylor was in the midst of yet another job for FDR. Remembering what had happened to Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, the President was determined to have a broad bipartisan consensus behind the (as yet unveiled) UN. He chose Mr. Taylor to be a key lieutenant in that campaign, both because Mr. Taylor had been intimately involved in its initial planning and also because of his important personal ties with influential leaders.

The first individuals Mr. Taylor was asked to contact were John W. Davis (Democratic presidential nominee in 1924, head of Davis Polk & Wardwell, and a leading conservative Democrat), Nathan L. Miller (former Republican governor of New York State and general counsel of U.S. Steel), and Charles Evans Hughes (Republican presidential nominee in 1916, and then recently retired chief justice of the Supreme Court). The Hughes contact was particularly interesting insofar as Mr. Hughes had been Myron Taylor’s favorite teacher at Cornell Law School (and Mr. Taylor would later donate the Law School’s residence hall in his mentor’s honor). Mr. Taylor and Justice Hughes met several times; the former student solicited helpful written comments from Justice Hughes, which Mr. Taylor later shared with FDR and Secretary of State Hull. Ultimately, all three leaders, along with others whom Mr. Taylor lobbied, became supporters of the UN.¹⁰

Myron Taylor Returns to a Liberated Rome

Two days after the liberation of Rome and the day after D-Day, FDR was focusing on the need to get Myron Taylor back to the hub of the world’s diplomacy. FDR notified Mr. Taylor that his “special talents are needed in [Rome],” and directed him to proceed there “at the earliest possible moment.” Knowing of Mr. Taylor’s loving relationship with Anabel, FDR separately confirmed to Mr. Taylor that his “Missus” would be able to join him shortly.



On June 19, 1944, Myron Taylor arrived in Allied-occupied Rome where, two days later, he met with the pope. FDR’s principal concern, and thus the main focus of that meeting was the growing opposition within the church to the Allies’ policy of unconditional surrender. The Church strongly disagreed with the policy on the grounds that it might lead to another Versailles-like peace, would likely strengthen German resistance, and would prolong the war unnecessarily (which, besides leading to greater destruction and loss of life, would also likely mean a greater domination of eastern Europe by Russia). Mr. Taylor, as part of explaining America’s general planning for the postwar world (which included telling the pope about



CLOCKWISE from FAR LEFT:

Mr. Taylor with General Clark at the U.S. 5th Army headquarters north of Rome in 1944

Allied troops in Saint Peter's Square

Italian civilians watch as sacks of flour are unloaded from a truck in Rome, shortly after the city had been liberated by American forces in 1944.



Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce, who later became the ambassador to Italy, publicly hailed Mr. Taylor's "magnificent work" [with Italian relief] for accomplishing "a near miracle."

the UN), stressed that a permanent world peace would only be possible with both a complete evisceration of German militarism and Russian postwar cooperation. The pope and his advisers never did change their view that these terms were "very unwise," but did agree to Mr. Taylor's entreaty not to break openly with the Allies (or to encourage attempts by Germany or Japan, which were seeking more lenient terms). FDR wrote Mr. Taylor that his efforts on this score were "particularly gratifying."

Other major issues that Myron Taylor and the pope focused on as the war drew to its inevitable conclusion concerned (1) the actual workings of the UN (Mr. Taylor showed the planning materials to Pope Pius; he also

delivered the news that the Vatican would not be granted membership as a nation-state), (2) the status of the church's efforts to save Jews and other Nazi targets (FDR specifically directed Mr. Taylor to express FDR's "deep-felt appreciation of the frequent action which the Holy See has taken on its own initiative in its generous and merciful efforts to render assistance to the victims of racial and religious persecution"),¹¹ and (3) the future of eastern Europe and, in particular, Poland (the Vatican was particularly interested in what was to be negotiated and agreed upon at Yalta).

For the remainder of the war (and in its direct aftermath), Mr. Taylor took on another task. In April 1944 (while still in Washington), he recognized that the Italian people were in

dire straights for the basic necessities. He established American Relief for Italy, Inc. This organization became the primary means by which food, clothing, and medicine were delivered to millions of suffering Italians. In short order, approximately \$6 million in public funds was raised and over \$37 million in relief supplies was distributed. Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce, who later became the ambassador to Italy, publicly hailed Mr. Taylor's "magnificent work" for accomplishing "a near miracle."

Myron Taylor and President Truman

Myron Taylor wanted very much to retire at the end of the war. But when FDR died on

LEFT to RIGHT:

Mr. Taylor arriving at the Rome airport during WWII.

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor in Rome in 1952.



April 13, 1945, Mr. Taylor said he would stay on to help the new president. When hearing of this, one of Pope Pius's top aides declared, "Thank God for the news."

With the Cold War becoming a reality, Harry Truman "reappointed" Mr. Taylor, declaring that "we shall establish an enduring peace only if we build upon its Christian principles." The new president thus redefined Mr. Taylor's mission as conferring "not only with the pope but with other leaders in the spiritual world and in the world of politics and secular affairs as he travels through Europe in the fulfillment of his mission."

But what did this mean exactly? In geopolitical terms, it meant that for the next four years Mr. Taylor visited church officials (and others) throughout Europe—including Russian-dominated areas of central and eastern Europe—in order (1) to get helpful Cold War information to which no other westerner had access, and (2) to shore up opposition by the church (clergy and members) to the Soviet Union in fragile postwar Europe. The pope, who had first talked to Mr. Taylor in 1936 about the day "not far away, when all members of religious orders will have to stand together, regardless of creed, to meet the menace of atheistic communism," was "enthusiastic" about Mr. Taylor's new role and pledged to do "anything" he could to be of help.¹²

In awarding Myron Taylor the Presidential Medal for Merit on December 20, 1948, (the pope had earlier named Mr. Taylor a Knight

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of the Order of Pius, First Degree), President Truman praised Myron Taylor for having "earned the accolades of his countrymen whom he has served faithfully and well wherever duty called him." Shortly thereafter, Myron Taylor informed both the pope and the president he would be retiring—a decision made public in January 1950.

A Final Retirement

One of Myron Taylor's major projects in his "nonactive" years was overseeing his 1949 gift to Cornell to build a \$1.5-million structure adjoining and complementary to the Law School, which had been built with his similar gift in 1928. The new building, named in honor of his wife, was to serve a unique and then novel purpose: providing an interfaith place of worship for all Cornell students and

faculty of any and all religions. His experience as the president's representative to the Vatican clearly played a key role in defining the mission of Anabel Taylor Hall, which was dedicated in 1952.

Myron Taylor quietly lived out the remainder of his life, not publishing his memoirs or seeking public accolades. When his beloved Anabel died on December 12, 1958, he lost his *raison d'être* and followed her five months later. After his death on May 6, 1959, *The New York Times*, reviewing his "extraordinary abilities" and his multifaceted career, employed considerable understatement when it concluded, "His was, indeed, a useful life." ■

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Mr. Taylor surrounded by papal dignitaries in Vatican City

1. Palestine was not a likely spot in 1939 because of England's opposition; there had been negotiations regarding Mindanao, an island in the Philippines archipelago, but they never came to fruition because of Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia.

2. As with most things Franklin D. Roosevelt did, the appointment of Mr. Taylor was undertaken for numerous domestic political reasons. FDR, for example, had an ongoing need to strengthen his political ties with the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, as well as with Roman Catholics in general, in advance of his bid for an unprecedented third term. FDR also hoped that the Vatican would exercise some restraining influence on German Catholics and Irish Catholics in America vis-à-vis his increasingly pro-British, interventionistic foreign policies. A third reason was to have the Catholic Church clamp down on "Radio Priest" Father Coughlin, whose weekly radio broadcasts and political efforts (especially in 1935 and 1936, but also later), were a thorn in the side of FDR's administration.

FDR had, in fact, been contemplating naming a presidential emissary to the Vatican at least since 1936. He and Vatican Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli (who later became Pope Pius XII) had discussed the subject days after President Roosevelt's 1936 election. FDR took his time in naming an emissary, however, principally because of the anticipated negative reaction by Protestant voters. And Mr. Taylor's appointment to the

position did bring on such a reaction, most heatedly from Southern Baptists. Some, though not all, of the religious hysteria/bigotry was offset by Mr. Taylor's Protestant beliefs and by his stature, as well as by FDR's assuring Protestant groups that this was only a "temporary" assignment, with Mr. Taylor merely being the president's personal "messenger" to the Vatican.

3. A historian of that era similarly described Mr. Taylor as a

"rhadamanthine kind of man; not pompous, but he seemed to view humanity as from a pedestal."

4. Indeed, because of the church's vociferous anticommunism, the Nazis thought that the pope might well endorse the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

5. That Mr. Taylor's personal intervention with the pope was essential seems without doubt. An American official in Italy wired Sumner Welles on October 7 that Mr. Taylor's visit "has had a definitely heartening effect on the pope ... [T]his should be considered as an important accomplishment and, in itself, well worth the trouble Mr. Taylor took to make the voyage." Two days later, FDR sent Mr. Taylor the pope's letter of September 20, which he had brought back from Rome, a letter that included effusive praise of the president's representative. FDR added: "You well deserve all that he says about you."

6. Count Ciano recorded in his diary that Germany (probably "that cripple Goebbels") proposes, "we give Myron Taylor a 'solemn booing.' How foolish! I can't say which is more ridiculous or disgusting."

7. An American official in the Holy City would later write of Mr. Taylor's immediate impact on the city: "Even though sixty-eight years old, Myron Taylor was an indefatigable worker. He would arise at 5 a.m. and work until 8 a.m., when he would eat a hearty breakfast. From then on, he would meet a constant stream of visitors, with spurts of dictating

in between. The pace he set left us exhausted, but he continued fresh as a daisy."

8. The *New York Times* embraced the pope's message as a strong condemnation of the Nazi regime; Hitler and his cronies understood that same message and began making plans for kidnapping the pope.

Pope Pius's role vis-à-vis the Holocaust is a complex one, about which much has been written. Given his diplomatic training and his understanding of geopolitical trends, the pope's public caution on a variety of matters, especially when the Vatican was the only non-Axis state in all of continental Europe in 1941–1942, seems understandable. At the same time, the record is replete with actions taken by the pope to save Jews throughout Europe (for example, Italian Jews after the collapse of Mussolini's government). This subject will be examined in greater detail Mr. Taylor's full biography.

9. As Mr. Taylor flew out of Rome for Madrid and Lisbon, the pilot tried to land the plane at a German airfield in Sardinia. Only bad weather prevented what looked like a plan to waylay FDR's "Ambassador Extraordinary."

10. Mr. Taylor was given the further task of meeting not only with the drafters of the 1944 National Republican Platform on Foreign Policy, but also with the nominee of the party, New York Governor Thomas Dewey. Mr. Taylor had begun this lobbying effort, but on June 15 of that year, he informed Cordell Hull that a "direct approach" to Mr. Dewey would not be possible because Mr. Taylor had been ordered back to Rome by the president.

11. On October 18, 1944, Mr. Taylor reported to FDR that the pope would make a "special appeal for the salvation of the Jews in Hungary at my request."

12. One example of how Mr. Taylor's new role paid obvious dividends was when he visited Berlin and asked to see Bishop Dibeluis, whose church was situated within the Russian zone. At a time when Americans were not given access to that area, General Lucius Clay reported that the request when put to the Russian authorities was met with: "Myron Taylor? Certainly."